

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Gary A. Winfield
The Honorable Steven J. Stafstrom
The Honorable Alex Kasser
The Honorable Matt Blumenthal
The Honorable John A. Kissel
The Honorable Craig C. Fishbein
Joint Committee on Judiciary
Connecticut General Assembly
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairs Winfield and Stafstrom, Vice Chairs Kasser and Blumenthal, Ranking Members Kissel and Fishbein, and Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Katie Kraschel, and I write to provide testimony in support of **Raised Bill No. 6321, An Act Concerning the Adoption and Implementation of the Connecticut Parentage Act**. I am a Connecticut-licensed attorney and the Executive Director of the Solomon Center for Health Law and Policy at Yale Law School. I have been married to my wife, Heather Coffey, since 2016, and we have lived in Mystic for over fifteen years. We are eager to see Connecticut's parentage laws change to fully protect all of the families who live here. Heather and I are supportive of this bill not just because it provides LGBTQ families like our own with equal dignity and respect, but because it will have a real and immediate impact on our lives as new parents-to-be.

My wife and I have always wanted to have children and began our journey to start a family through assisted reproduction over two years ago. Today, we are thrilled to say that we are preparing to welcome our first child to the world in mere days.

Despite our many privileges, however, we have faced difficulties because of outdated and discriminatory laws still on the books in Connecticut. When we first began trying to start a family, I had to fight to access insurance coverage for fertility treatments because I was not diagnosed as "infertile"—which had been defined by reference to heterosexual couples. Even once I secured a place in the fertility insurance program, we incurred more out-of-pocket expenses than a similarly situated heterosexual couple because clinical standards are based on heterosexual presumptions. All told, the fertility process was emotionally, physically, and financially draining. Still, as an Iowa native, I felt lucky that my wife and I were embarking on our journey to start a family in a proudly pro-LGBTQ state—the second in the nation to achieve marriage equality.

But the difficulties we have faced as a lesbian couple have not ended now that I am pregnant. Most recently, Heather and I were shocked and upset to learn that the state's birth certificate worksheet that we will need to sign prior to discharge from the hospital after birth does not accommodate same-sex couples like us. The form, which will be used to fill out our baby's birth certificate, assumes that all newborns have both a "mother" and a "father," rather than simply

two “parents.” Nowhere on the form is Heather, my wife and future loving parent to our child, given the ability to have her parental status recognized except as a “father.” This birth certificate worksheet reflects the outdated and discriminatory parentage laws still on the books in Connecticut.

This is not right. All vital records forms, including birth certificates and birth certificate worksheets, should include, respect, and affirm all Connecticut families and their children. Beyond the fact that the worksheet’s language is outdated in light of the state’s decade-long recognition of same-sex marriage, the worksheet imposes significant dignitary harms on new parents like Heather and me. The prospect that our child’s birth certificate—that vital document that first recognizes the legal bond between a newborn and its parents—will erase or vitiate Heather’s status as a mother leaves us demoralized and vulnerable at a time when we need to focus our energies on preparing to be new, first-time parents to an infant. Connecticut’s parentage laws, and the administrative forms that execute those laws, need to change to recognize parents regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

We, and all members Connecticut’s LGBTQ community, deserve better. I ask that the Committee support Bill 6321 so that Heather and I don’t have to face any more demoralizing hurdles to ensure that both of us are recognized as parents to our child.

Thank you,

Katherine L. Kraschel
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